

ROUTING

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 11 February 1978 CG NIDC 78/035C

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 11 February 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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LEBANON: Tense Situation Report

25X1 [redacted] //The situation in Lebanon was extremely tense yesterday. Efforts to bring about an end to the fighting in Beirut were under way, but skirmishing continued. There remains a serious threat that extremists may provoke a renewal of major fighting. [redacted]

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25X1 [redacted] //Sporadic fighting continued in Beirut between Syrian Army troops and Maronite Christians, despite an order from the Syrian commander in Lebanon that his forces fire only in self-defense. The political leaders of the Christian Lebanese Front issued a conciliatory statement regretting the clashes and supporting a cease-fire.//

25X1 [redacted] //The statement reaffirms Syria's right to keep troops in Lebanon, calls for a joint investigative committee to prevent a resumption of fighting, appeals to all sides to control extremists, and expresses confidence in Syrian President Asad and Lebanese President Sarkis. The Maronite leaders probably recognize that their forces are no match for the Syrians, and they want a rapid end to the fighting.//

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25X1 [redacted] Israeli reaction to the Beirut fighting, Defense Minister Weizman today visited Israeli military positions along the Lebanese border and met with Major

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Haddad, commander of Christian forces in southern Lebanon. Weizman's visit clearly was meant to underscore continuing Israeli support for the Christians and to remind the Syrians of Israel's acute interest in the current developments.//

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[redacted] //Sporadic artillery shelling between the Maronite enclaves and Palestinian positions is continuing in the southern part of the country. The Israelis reported that several shells fell on their side of the border, but they elected not to retaliate [redacted]

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[redacted] The fighting this week has intensified the already badly strained Syrian-Maronite relationship. The Christians' fears about Damascus' long-term intentions in Lebanon have been steadily increasing since the end of the civil war. In part, this is the result of the inevitable frictions caused by an occupation army, but it also reflects the Christians' traditional antipathy for Muslim Syria.//

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[redacted] //The Maronites' fears have recently been exacerbated by the improvement in relations between Syria and the Palestinians and by reports of a Syrian request for a mutual security pact with Beirut to legitimize an open-ended Syrian military presence in the country.//

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[redacted] Our best judgment of the situation in Lebanon at present is that it is still highly volatile, and we expect Christian extremists to instigate further incidents, probably involving Palestinians as well as Syrians. None of the principal Christian leaders exerts full control over all his militia elements; and a relatively minor incident, such as the apparent Christian ambush of two Syrian trucks yesterday, can trigger a situation in which more moderate Christian leaders would feel compelled to commit their main forces.

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[] A further element fueling present tensions is the numerous rumors in Beirut regarding Syrian plotting against Christian leaders, imminent Syrian attacks, probable Israeli incursions in the south, and provocations by Israeli "agents." Such rumors are not easily stopped and will complicate the efforts of moderate Christian leaders and the Sarkis government to cool the situation.

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[] We expect Asad will try to avoid an all-out confrontation, as his cease-fire order indicates. The Syrians now find themselves, however, in a position of having taken some heavy casualties and of having had their authority challenged with relative impunity. In an effort to reassert their authority and to settle scores, local units may provoke serious incidents themselves. Although Asad prefers to move cautiously in dealing with Lebanon, he may come under pressure to take strong action once the Syrian casualty figures become known.

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[] A final danger in the present equation is the possibility of a decision by the Lebanese Muslims to enter the fighting. If Muslims do move to support either side in any further fighting, this will heighten the prospects that the Palestinians will be drawn in. The Palestinians have consistently believed that they need to side with the Muslims in order to avoid being totally isolated in Lebanon. As much as they would prefer to avoid another confrontation, they would be unlikely to abandon their previous policy. To avoid this dilemma, we expect to see the Palestinians working to prevent the Muslims actively from taking sides. []

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RHODESIA: Muzorewa's Stubbornness

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[] The internal Rhodesian settlement talks being held in Salisbury have been temporarily stymied by Bishop Abel Muzorewa's stubbornness on the issue of voters' rolls, but they are not likely to collapse because of it. The talks could go into an extended stalemate, however, if the issue is not resolved before Muzorewa leaves for a European tour he is planning.

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[] Muzorewa has held firm for a week now on his proposal that only 20 of the 28 parliamentary seats that are to be allotted to whites under a black majority government be elected

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from a separate white voters' roll. He wants the remainder to be elected from a common roll. Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith and Muzorewa's allies in the talks--Ndabaningi Sithole and Chief Jeremiah Chirau--have already agreed on separate voters' rolls.

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[] Muzorewa believes that under his proposal white moderates opposed to Smith's Rhodesian Front Party would have a good chance of being elected to the eight seats chosen from a common roll. His chief legal adviser, for example, is a white lawyer from Salisbury who ran strongly in the national election last fall even though he lost. Had blacks been able to vote for him, he may well have taken a seat away from Smith's party.

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[] To make his proposal more palatable to Smith, Muzorewa offered to agree to raise the number of votes required to overturn constitutional safeguards for whites from 78 to 86 of the 100 members of the proposed new parliament.

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[] //If the problem is not resolved soon, further discussion may have to await Muzorewa's return from Europe. He is anxious to make a European trip in order to solicit support for his organization and for an internal settlement.// []

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NAMIBIA: Border Clashes with SWAPO

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[] //The South African military commander in Namibia announced yesterday that his forces had conducted a "hot pursuit" raid into Angola on Thursday, killing 18 guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization. SWAPO, which is participating this weekend in "proximity talks" on the future of Namibia with Secretary Vance and the foreign ministers of the UK, France, West Germany, and Canada, will probably cite the incident as justification for demanding the withdrawal of all South African forces from the territory.//

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[] //Earlier this week, Angola lodged a complaint at the UN protesting South African military operations north of its border with Namibia. South Africa has admitted on several occasions to crossing the border in "hot pursuit" of SWAPO guerrillas, and it may be conducting such raids with greater frequency now because of the recent increase in guerrilla activity in western Ovamboland.//

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FRANCE: Communist Election Strategy

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[redacted] Socialist leader Francois Mitterrand, who recently observed that he has "worn himself out" trying to determine what the contradictory shifts in Communist statements mean, earlier had rejected a Communist call for a meeting of the

Left Alliance to update its Common Program between the two rounds of the election on 12 and 19 March. He said he would await the results of the second round before discussing the Common Program or what the composition of a future leftist government might be.

25X1 [] The Socialist Party later modified this position, saying that if the Communists publicly declared that they would stand down in the second round for the best-placed leftist candidates, the Socialists would participate in a meeting between the two rounds of the election.

25X1 [] The Socialists think they are in a strong position relative to the Communists because they believe that a majority of Communist voters will shift their votes in the second round to the better placed leftist candidates regardless of party orders and that the party has no choice but to order them to do so in order to save face.

25X1 [] Communist leader Georges Marchais' comments on participation in the government have become more pointed in recent days. He said this week that his party's share of government portfolios should be based on the percentage of votes won and not on the number of seats and that seven ministries for his party would be appropriate.

25X1 [] This may simply be a tactic designed to project the image of a responsible Communist Party ready to participate fully in French political life. It may also be a reaction to the fact that Marchais' terms for Communist participation in the government did not sit well with the Communist electorate; a late January poll showed that 87 percent of Communist voters still favor continued leftist unity.

25X1 [] The Communist Party politburo nevertheless remains fully in control of the party apparatus and is quite capable of sending the party into a 180-degree maneuver after the election, if it so decides. On balance, it appears that the party has not yet decided whether it will participate in the government if its conditions--especially that of a "well updated" Common Program--are not met.

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[] Marchais also said this week that leaders of opposition groups that have not signed the Common Program should also be able to join a future leftist government. This rather cryptic statement sheds light on current Communist tactics in certain individual electoral districts.

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[] The party has announced its decision to withdraw its candidates in the first round in four districts to benefit two opposition Gaullists (of the Union of Progressive Gaullists--a leftist Gaullist splinter group) and two candidates of the Unified Socialist Party, a left-Socialist splinter group. Neither of these two parties has signed the Common Program, nor do they have any institutional ties to the Communist Party.

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[] The Communists are not being altruistic. The Communist withdrawal was designed in two cases to undercut the Socialist candidates, and in the other two to draw support away from the center-right. Should these four candidates win, they would owe their seats to the Communists, and in the unlikely event they should be given government portfolios, they could be expected to side with the Communists.

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VIETNAM-CAMBODIA: Relations

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[] *//Cambodia publicly rejected Vietnam's 5 February peace proposal in a radio broadcast this week.*

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[] *//If the Cambodians go to the UN, they will probably be more interested in using it as a forum for denouncing Vietnamese aggression than in reaching a settlement. Vietnam has made effective use of the international press and foreign diplomats in depicting itself as the victim of persistent Cambodian provocations.*

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[] *//The Cambodian Government's access to the media and the diplomatic community is limited, and its propaganda has been much less effective. The visit by a Chinese delegation to Phnom Penh in mid-January apparently was an effort to convince the Cambodians to improve their international image.*

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[REDACTED] //The situation along the border remains tense. Although fighting appears to have remained at a fairly low level since the Vietnamese peace proposal, each side has accused the other of launching new attacks. Vietnam continues to make veiled threats, and Cambodia, which has withdrawn its invitation for Peking-based diplomats to visit Phnom Penh and the border areas, continues to voice strident defiance of Vietnamese military superiority. [REDACTED]

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BRIEFS

China-India

25X1 [] China has followed up on Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping's offer, made in Nepal last week, to improve relations with India. According to press reports from Peking and New Delhi, the Chinese are sending a friendship delegation to India later this month. An Indian press report says the delegation will carry an invitation to Prime Minister Desai to visit Peking.

25X1 [] China and India have been gingerly exploring ways to improve their relations since they exchanged ambassadors last year. A 15-man Chinese trade delegation arrived in India on Wednesday for a two-week tour of Indian industries. That delegation was only the second Chinese group to visit India since the two countries withdrew their ambassadors in 1962.

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USSR-Laos

25X1 [] A high-ranking Soviet military delegation led by Soviet Deputy Defense Minister Pavlovskiy visited Laos from 29 January to 3 February. According to a Soviet Foreign Ministry official, the visit was part of the "normal" exchange of visits between the two countries and was intended to strengthen Laos' "defensive capabilities," a sure indication that Soviet military assistance was discussed.

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[] the Soviets, Vietnamese, and Lao have been meeting periodically since December to discuss the reorganization of the Lao Army along Vietnamese lines and equipping it entirely with Soviet and East European arms.

25X1 [] Pavlovskiy's visit may also have been intended to reassert the Soviet position in Laos as opposed to China's. While Pavlovskiy was in Laos, the Soviets intensified their propaganda campaign in support of Vietnam in its struggle with Cambodia. Although Pavlovskiy asked to visit northern Laos, where the Chinese have maintained a sizable presence for over 10 years, the Lao appear to have steered him clear of the region.

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